

THE OCTOBER CONTEST!

Shall FREE TRADE be the SETTLED POLICY of this GOVERNMENT?

A D D R E S S

DELIVERED BY

HON. ALEXANDER K. MCCLURE,
OF FRANKLIN COUNTY, PA.,

At the WIGWAM, corner of Sixth and Brown Streets,
Philadelphia,

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 5TH, 1860.

FELLOW-CITIZENS OF PHILADELPHIA:—

We are upon the threshold of the great political revolution of the age. It is not the whirlwind that has, in times gone by, swept the so-called Democratic party from power. Those revolutions demanded redress from the flagrant abuses of the Government; but they taught nothing—established nothing. Honors and emoluments changed; a few of the glaring evils of power were corrected, and there the revolution ended.

But the mighty revolution now progressing is based upon vital and positive issues, which are clearly defined and well understood; and the popular verdict in their favor will shape the destiny of this Republic, when you and I shall sleep in the “City of the Silent.” It is second in importance and positive meaning only to one great struggle in our history, and that is the revolution of our fathers, that gave birth to freedom in the New World, and handed down to us this rich inheritance, crimsoned with their blood. This revolution, fraught with such momentous issues, invades no rights, assails no ancient landmarks. It will be bloodless in its achievement, and rich in the fruits of enlightened progress and fraternal peace. It will establish, as the settled policy of this Republic, for ourselves and our children, these just and vital doctrines:—

That the union of these States shall be maintained against all Sectionalism and Treason, come from whence they may.

That the compromises of the Constitution and the supremacy of the laws shall be preserved inviolate.

That adequate Protection shall be afforded by the General Government to our industry.

That our free Territories shall not be desolated by the extension of Human Slavery.

That our great Western domain shall be devoted to Free Homes for actual settlers.

That the purity of the ballot-box and the integrity of the elective franchise shall be maintained, as the very basis of our free institutions.

That our Government shall owe its first and highest duty to our own peaceful progress ; to the development of our own vast resources ; to the elevation and prosperity of our own industry ; asking nothing of the world that is not right, and submitting to nothing that is wrong.

These are the issues. They are so clearly marked that he who runs may read. Against them we have arrayed every variety of men and measures. Distracted, demoralized and belligerent, weighed down by their own perfidy and profligacy, exhausted by their own intestine conflicts, yet they hope to stagger into the field and rally for a death-struggle. That it will be desperate in effort, and decisive in its result, the signs of the times clearly foreshadow. They will come with all the hues of the chameleon, and with all the "cohesive power of public plunder." They will bring gifts to flatter, and vengeance to terrify ; and in the face of the handwriting on the wall, that inexorably points to their overwhelming defeat, they will die upon the field cursing each other.

We have a contest in October. It is the Magenta of the war. What is it to teach ! Of its result I do not inquire, for that is not doubtful. But when Mr. Curtin shall have received 230,000 votes, and Mr. Foster shall have received 200,000 votes, how shall we interpret it ? We shall know that 230,000 men have declared for the maintenance of the Union and the supremacy of the laws ; for protection to our industry, for free territories and for free lands to the landless ; *but for what shall 200,000 men have voted ?* For a slave-code and for disunion ? or for popular sovereignty and non-intervention ? For a protective tariff, or for free trade ? For maintaining the freedom of free territories, or for carrying the withering blight of slavery, in the name of the Constitution, into every portion of the Union ? With such issues in the contest, men must intend something by their votes ; what will the Foster vote mean ? Is it to be counted for Breckinridge in South Carolina, and for Douglas in Illinois ? Is Yancey to be made jubilant by the fact that 200,000 men in Pennsylvania have voted for a slave-code and to maintain the right of secession, while Richardson, of Illinois, proclaims the same strength here for Douglas and his peculiar doctrines ? To these questions there must be answers. Politicians may combine to carry the spoils of office, each intent upon cheating the other when success shall have been reached, but the thousands and tens of thousands of the people who think this free government worthy of their fidelity, are not to be blindfolded and huckstered like sheep in the shambles. They look around on this great State and they see on all hands the proud monuments of their industry. They see the iron horse singing his wild song over our mountains and through our valleys, and carrying in his train the fruits of our labor to pour into the lap of our commerce. They see beautiful homes, and green fields, and schools and churches ; they see our hills laden with slumbering wealth, and our plains rich in all that a bountiful God could bestow ; and with all these blessings they behold our laborers beggared, our commerce crippled, the rude music of our forges and the hum of our spindles silenced—all—all *because the Democratic party has made Free Trade its favorite policy.* Will such men, those who seek in vain the privilege to toil, and to enrich our State by the development of its wealth ; will such men turn upon themselves again, and vote even a *doubtful* ticket, on the question of protecting their own labor ? Will they vote even a *doubtful* ticket on the question of protecting the territories as free homes for themselves and their children ? Will they vote even a *doubtful* ticket on the question of a slave-code, that would plant the menial slave beside them in every field and shop in the West, and degrade and dishonor their labor ? Will they vote even a *doubtful* ticket on the question of Disunion ? *Never !*

But it is answered that Mr. Foster is *for* a Protective Tariff—that he voted against the repeal of the tariff of 1842. True, he did so, and he boastingly refers to his record as proof positive of his fidelity on this question. *The same year he voted with David Wilmot for the Wilmot Proviso.* Is that record proof positive of his convictions now ? Is a vote for the tariff in 1846 to preclude inquiry as to his position, while a vote for the Wilmot Proviso, cast during the same session, is not to be regarded as indicating his policy on the Slavery

question? He now denounces the men who think and act as he thought and acted in Congress on the issue of restricting Slavery, as sectional agitators; but a single vote for the tariff is to remove all suspicion as to his fidelity to Protection.

Henry D. Foster is the foe of a Protective Policy! I would not do him injustice. Our cause does not require that at our hands. He was a party to the great fraud of 1844, that carried Pennsylvania for Mr. Polk over Mr. Clay, on the ground that the Tariff of 1842 should not be disturbed. With the inauguration of President Polk, Henry D. Foster entered Congress, and when the perfidy of that Administration on this question became manifest, he was silent as the grave. His voice was not heard asserting the claims of his own people as himself and the Democratic party had professed to recognize them, and as his very manhood required him to do. He meekly voted against the repeal, and then fell into the arms of the Administration that was reeking with a fraud practiced upon his own constituents and brethren. Fourteen years ago this scene was enacted in Washington. Since then Mr. Foster has been on the stump, in our Legislative halls, and strove to be both a national Senator and Representative. During all these fourteen years, his voice has never been heard in repudiation of the perfidy of the Democratic party in giving us free trade, with its endless train of desolation, for the protective tariff of 1842. He steadily and without protest, voted for free trade members of Congress, for free trade Governors, for free trade Presidents, and wherever his party has led he has followed it. *It has led undeviatingly for free trade*, and no one followed more complacently than Henry D. Foster!

At last, however, he is presented as a candidate for Governor. His own State is prostrated in the dust by a financial revulsion, brought on by the legitimate results of Free Trade. Our specie was drained from us to pay for foreign fabrics, and our labor left unemployed and beggared at home. Disaster could not but follow, and three years ago the storm broke with relentless fury upon our people. The stoutest hearted quailed beneath the stroke, and thousands went down to bankruptcy and ruin, while other thousands have to-day but half recovered from the blow. Adversity taught its lesson, and our merchants, our mechanics, our business men, our manufacturers, and all others who live by their industry, resolved that the Government must afford protection. They appealed to a Democratic Administration in vain, and they are now about to strike decisively for their own labor and for their own firesides. The storm gathers over the head of the long-silent Foster, and he makes a pilgrimage to Washington, and has it duly chronicled by telegraph that he had gone there to pass the Morrill tariff bill.

It would naturally be supposed that when he went there and found the fate of the tariff in the hands of a Democratic Senate, he would demand as a matter of right to his prostrated brethren a protective policy. He could well have said "Gentlemen, the tariff of 1842 was perfidiously destroyed, and free trade given in exchange by a Democratic Administration. It was done in violation of our plighted faith, and it has brought desolation to every section of our State. It has paralyzed thousands of strong arms and brought want to their homes; it has left our boundless wealth to slumber in our hills, it has crippled our commerce by denying it the rich fruits of a prosperous and diversified industry; and in the name of my great State, and in the name of my suffering brethren, I demand the fostering care of the General Government, by the passage of the Protective Tariff bill now before you for consideration." Such, however, was not his language. He implored them to pass the Tariff, "for," said he, "*if you defeat the Tariff, Col. Curtin will defeat me overwhelmingly. I will not have the ghost of a chance!*" This was the first Tariff speech Henry D. Foster made in fourteen years!

But what of his mission? Where are its fruits? *Free trade still reigns!* Col. Curtin was there begging for Protection, *not* for his own sake, but for his native State; and not a man in the Senate, opposed to the Democracy, failed to vote for it. By Democratic vote alone it was defeated, after it had passed the House by a decisive majority.

If it were possible to elect Henry D. Foster Governor, this fall, what would the popular verdict teach on the tariff? Would not every Democratic State South rejoice that Pennsylvania had voted against the Tariff party? In vain would it be urged that Mr. Foster had yielded to the pressure, and professed to equal Colonel Curtin in his devotion to protection. When Hunter and Slidell, and other Southern Democratic leaders refused to bend against free trade, even to give a ray of life for the Democracy to save Pennsylvania, what would be their answer if your State should repudiate those who are honestly and consistently identified with protection? *It would fix free trade as the settled policy of this Government!* Can this be doubted? But when Pennsylvania shall thunder in favor of protection by the election of Col. Curtin, the People's candidate for Governor, there will be no mistaking the meaning of her verdict. It will be a demand for protection consistent with her rights, and she will send Senators and Congressmen who will be true to her interests. *Then, and not till then, can we have relief from the terrible blight of Free Trade!*

I repeat it, Henry D. Foster is *not* the friend of protection. He cannot be, and remain in the so-called Democratic party. It is the deadly foe of free industry. Its National Convention at Cincinnati, in 1856, declared directly for "progressive free trade;" its Convention at Charleston, in 1860, did the same, and ridiculed and scouted a tariff resolution; its two Conventions at Baltimore did the same; and both of its candidates for the Presidency are conspicuous for their hostility to protection. Douglas voted *for* the repeal of the tariff of 1842, and has steadily voted and acted in favor of free trade during his whole Congressional career. Breckinridge has never, by vote or speech, favored protection. *Neither would approve a tariff bill looking to the protection of our industry;* and yet one or the other is supported for the Presidency by Mr. Foster. Is that the act of a friend of the tariff?

I submit to candid men whether this is not a fair and just test of Mr. Foster's true position on this momentous question. He comes from the ranks of those who, by matchless perfidy, gave us Free Trade; he has acted in their counsels for fourteen years; he has sustained them by every vote and act down to the present year, even when the fruits of Free Trade were closing almost every avenue of prosperous industry; and now, with his professions of friendship lingering on our ears, he will crown his devotion to Free Trade by voting for a Free Trade candidate for the Presidency, who would, if chosen, hold the fate of the tariff in his hands!

I repeat again—*Henry D. Foster is the deadly foe of protection!* That he is *not* its open, manly foe, while striving to inflict the deadliest wounds upon it, can be mentioned only to his shame.

Looking fairly and dispassionately at the record of Henry D. Foster as made up by his acts, we can tell what interpretation to put upon the vote he shall receive in October next, on the vital issue of protection. Whatever voters may honestly intend, they will be counted for Free Trade—they can mean nothing else. And yet, with the gigantic fraud of 1844 familiar to all as household words, and with its sad fruits still reaching every shop, and every counting-room, and every place of business, it is boasted that tariff men will vote for Mr. Foster. It is boasted in every Free Trade caucus throughout the State, that in Philadelphia, the great manufacturing metropolis of our land, American and Tariff votes are to be transferred to Foster. If it be true, all should know it—leaders and masses. If it be false, as I know it is, the American mechanics and laboring men of this City should know that the last death-struggle of our Free Trade rulers is quickened by the hope that the tariff Americans are to fall with them and share their dishonored grave.

The Boston Pilot demands the defeat of Col. Curtin. His crime is, that he has dared to be a Protestant and an American; and side by side with it stand the free-trade Democracy—the old, malignant foe of every doctrine of the Americans—and demand his defeat, because he has not declared for John Bell. Is Foster for John Bell? If so, he is entitled to the votes of those who prefer John Bell for the Presidency. Does he not war upon every

principle and every feature of the public policy of John Bell? I do not blame the Breckinridge and the Douglas politicians for formally and cordially supporting Mr. Foster. They can make common cause for him, for between them there are two common bonds of union. Both are for free trade; both are for the spoils; and each hopes to behead the other if they can succeed. But if Bell men are to vote for Foster, what is to be *their* return? what the consideration? You see it telegraphed now, from here and from Washington, to the secession journals, that the Bell men are to join hands and save Foster. It was announced at the Breckinridge Headquarters in Washington, but a few nights ago, by Hon. John M. Laundrum and other disunion leaders, *that they had cheering news from the North!*—that the Bell men had joined to defeat Lincoln, and that “*they were now sure of the election of either Breckinridge by the House, or Lane by the Senate.*” It was boastingly added that the Breckinridge party meant to make the Bell men the instruments by which they would again ride into power, and rapturous applause went up from the delighted disunionists. I do not for a moment suppose that the masses of the Bell men, either here or elsewhere, mean thus to place the destiny of this great Republic in the hands of reckless secessionists; but I do know that the only hopes inspired for the black flag of disunion in this contest, have been based upon the expected aid of the Bell men of Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey. If the Bell men vote the free trade and disunion State ticket, to elect John Bell President, and the disunionists themselves vote the same ticket, to elect either Breckinridge or Lane President, who is to be cheated? There is fraud to be practiced upon some party. Upon whom is it to fall? The Breckinridge men seem to know full well that it is *not* to fall upon them. The Custom House officials of this City, who have had Mr. Foster in close keeping while here, seem to know that they are *not* to be cheated by polling a large vote for him. They feel quite easy that each vote for Foster is to count with all the moral force that votes can possess, for Free Trade, for Breckinridge, for Buchanan. They do not toil and sacrifice their means in vain. They do not rely upon vague promises and remote contingencies. They could not be persuaded that with one vote to start on, Breckinridge could be elected President in the House; or that with but two to count certain, Lane could be chosen in the Senate. They leave that kind of faith to the friends of John Bell, while they keep candidates for Governor within their own exclusive circle, and count their votes for President in the House and Senate by the ancient rule of simple addition.

Imagine, if you will, that a majority of the votes of this great city of workshops and factories, shall be cast for Henry D. Foster for Governor. I care not by what combinations, or by what means, or with what assurances, it may be done. There is not a disunionist who would not shout himself hoarse over the triumph, there is not a foe to free industry who would not be wild with joy, there is not an advocate of a slave-code who would not hail your city as striking for the universal dominion of slavery, there is not a slaver upon your coast that would not take fresh courage in its brutal traffic, for the City of Brotherly Love would be heralded from one end of the Union to the other as striking a decisive blow for the right of secession, for free trade, for slavery extension. *What share would the friends of John Bell have in the triumph?* A patriotic and unspotted public life would be closed in the palsied arms of free trade and disunion Democracy—its lustre dimmed, its setting sun clouded with dishonor, its end a starless night.

I do not fear that the laboring men of Philadelphia can be either bribed or bullied into the support of the free trade candidate for Governor; but some may be defrauded as free trade has defrauded honest men before. If the Foster men were to come before you manfully and declare, “We are the authors of free trade and its defenders, come and cast your votes with us”—not one—no, not one would do so. But they come with gifts and fair promises, and mean to betray, as they have betrayed in times gone by. They come with the professions of devotion to protection, *and mean that no Tariff man shall be chosen President by their votes!* They beg of the Bell men to elect Foster, in order to defeat Lincoln. And what do they promise for John Bell? What is the entertainment to which men are invited?

Suppose you could elect Foster and defeat Lincoln—what then? Is there a Free Trade and Disunion, or even a Popular Sovereignty Democrat, who will give any tangible assurance that he will vote for John Bell in the House, or Everett in the Senate? Are avowed Disunionists, who hold the power in the Democratic Congressional and Senatorial delegations, to stamp the lie upon themselves by voting for Bell and Everett? The question is a fair one; who is prepared to answer it? Granted for a moment, that an election by the people is to be defeated, that the popular will is to be ignored, and the Presidency to be thrown into the hands of a few reckless political gamblers. When confusion and chaos shall come upon us, when the country shall be convulsed from centre to circumference, and the integrity and power of this Government is about to be tested to an extent never approached in our history, who then shall claim the victory? John Bell will have one—but one—vote in the House, and the votes of *six men can make Breckinridge President!* Stephen A. Douglas would have but one vote in the House, and under no circumstances could he command any more. If Hamlin and Lane are the men who would be returned to the Senate in case of a failure to elect in the House, Breckinridge might fail of an election, for Lane would all the better serve the purposes of the Free Trade Disunionists, and they could easily elect him; but if Hamlin and Everett should be the men who must pass the ordeal of an election in the Senate, the House would make the President. *Six men could do it*, and there are twenty from whom to select the six. He who supposes that the House would not make the election, with so few votes wanted and such vast interests at stake, has read history and studied mankind to little purpose. In such a contest, it becomes men to look results squarely in the face. I repeat, who would be the victors by the election of Foster, if it is to bring with it the defeat of an election for President by the people? Let reason and truth dictate the answer!

In New York, pretended leaders of the Americans, who are in the interests of the Free Trade Democracy, have transferred themselves to Douglas, and are now striving to force the masses of the party into the arms of nearly the only consistent free trader of our leading statesmen. The New York Express appeals to the Bell men to vote the truck and dicker ticket, to elect John Bell, while its editor, James Brooks, stumps Maine for Douglas!

In New Jersey, the same class of men have gone into the arms of the Disunionists and arranged their votes for Breckinridge. Here the same fraud is to be attempted to transfer the Americans to Free Trade and Foster, backed by the Boston Pilot, the New York Express, the Freeman's Journal, the Washington Constitution, and the two mendicant government organs of this city—the Argus and the Pennsylvanian. It will be done in the name of John Bell—in the name of Protection. But when that day comes, let those who wish to cast their votes on their own account, look well before they deposit their ballots.

The October contest in Pennsylvania will settle the future tariff policy of the Government. When Col. Curtin shall be chosen Governor, the verdict cannot be mistaken. It will have no double or doubtful meaning. It will be squarely, unqualifiedly, *for* protection. With him, and with him only, can a Legislature be chosen, that will send an honest friend of the tariff to the Senate, in room of Governor Bigler; and with him, and with him only, can be carried a delegation to Congress that can command protection to our languishing industry. He who thinks otherwise, or permits himself to be led otherwise, turns upon himself with suicidal hands. Col. Curtin is not only for protection himself, but all his party, here and elsewhere, are unwavering friends of the same policy. His election will speak for the revival of our prostrated brethren in distinct and unequivocal tones; it will place the tariff party of the country in power, and will declare the same principle from the home of Hamlin to the grave of Broderick.

But the Free Trade and Disunion party will not stop with attempting a startling fraud upon the Americans. In its death throes it will reach wildly for aid to friend and foe—to those who have shared its favors and to those over whom it has thrown its withering blight.

It will turn to the commerce it has crippled, and beg to be saved from its just, but fearful doom. It will plead in the name of the Union it has wantonly and wickedly thrown into sectional discord; and some, it may be, will hearken to its appeal. I come from a portion of our State where revulsions fall lightly upon our people. So long as seed-time and harvest shall come in their order, we hope for plenty and to spare. We are strangers to the rule that would govern opinion by the laws of trade. We pour the teeming wealth of our rich valleys into the lap of your commerce, but we exact no political duties in return. We ask all men to be just to themselves, to their own great State, to their common country. We know where fall the deadliest blows when the dark day of disaster comes. They fall not upon our rich fields, for their golden harvests come though your ships should rot at your wharves. It may reach us, and cloud our prosperity; but its terrible fury falls here, and scatters desolation in its course. In 1857, when the full fruits of Free Trade burst upon the country, its keenest thrusts came to the heart of your commerce. There is scarcely a merchant in all your city who did not stagger beneath that revulsion; and how many have disappeared in utter bankruptcy? Who, in your commercial circles escaped it? What counting-house did not find disaster hovering around it? Many, very many, fell to rise no more. Many others have bent beneath the storm, and now struggle in concealed embarrassment, hoping for the return of prosperity. All, all were crippled, more or less, and still the fruits of free trade linger in your midst. Your Banks were closed against you in the hour of peril; their specie had been drained from them to pay for European labor while our own brethren begged in vain for the boon of requited industry. Now the authors of all this desolation are trembling before the threatened reprobation of a long deceived and often betrayed people. They see the retributive stroke aimed at them with fatal precision, and in the recklessness of despair, they turn to the commerce they have paralyzed and to the Americans they have spurned, and beg, as did the evil ones of old, to be let alone in their terrible supremacy.

I cannot pursue the investigation of these questions as I would wish. The brief time usually devoted to a single speech, is altogether inadequate to the task. But I must impress upon all candid and patriotic men the truth that the votes to be cast for Governor, in a few weeks, will tell for years to come for the weal or woe of our great industrial interests. Nor will the significance of the popular verdict in October, stop with the vital question of the honor and the prosperity of our labor. When disunion is openly avowed and threatened; when it is boldly declared that the decision of the people in the selection of a Chief Magistrate will be insolently defied; when our Territories are thrown open to the fatal tread of the menial slave, and free homes refused to our own sons, who would make the Western plains bloom and blossom as the rose; when our treasury is bankrupt, and our national debt steadily increasing; when official corruption and profligacy have impoverished us at home and disgraced us abroad, and when States are persistently refused admission into the Union, for the single crime of devotion to free labor, the people of Pennsylvania must feel that their votes in October will speak trumpet-tongued for the cause of right or for the cause of wrong. That they shall speak for truth, for freedom, for our free industry, and for the integrity of the Union, we owe it to ourselves, to our country, to our posterity, and to God!

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